

CLAIMS

1 1. A method in a computer system for providing computer equipment
2 to a customer, comprising:

3 receiving an indication of an available piece of the computer equipment;

4 updating a database to indicate a lease of the computer equipment to the
5 customer in return for a payment from the customer corresponding at least in part to a
6 length of time the customer leases the computer equipment;

7 receiving an indication from the customer that the lease is terminated after
8 an arbitrary, customer-selected time period has elapsed, without incurring a penalty to
9 the customer; and

10 updating the database to indicate that the computer equipment is received
11 back from the customer.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the customer is a first customer and
2 the payment is a first customer payment, and wherein the method further comprises
3 updating the database to indicate sale of the computer equipment to a second customer,
4 or lease of the computer equipment to the second customer by providing the computer
5 equipment to the second customer and receiving a second customer payment
6 corresponding at least in part to the length of time the second customer leases the
7 computer equipment.

1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 indicating a commitment to leasing a selected number of computer
3 components from a component vendor;
4 updating the database to indicate leasing at least one of the computer
5 components from the vendor by receiving the computer component from the vendor and
6 paying the vendor at predetermined intervals a periodic vendor payment corresponding to
7 the cost of the computer component multiplied by an interest rate factor and divided by a

8 total number of predetermined intervals that elapse until the estimated value of the
9 component is zero; and
10 updating the database to indicate payment of the periodic vendor payment
11 after the total number of predetermined intervals has elapsed.

1 4. The method of claim 3, further comprising updating the database to
2 indicate purchasing the component from the vendor and selling the computer equipment
3 to the other customer or leasing the computer equipment to another customer by
4 providing the computer equipment to the other customer and receiving payments from
5 the other customer while continuing to pay the vendor the periodic vendor payment.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 indicating leasing of at least one of the components of the computer
3 equipment from a vendor by receiving the component from the vendor and paying the
4 vendor at predetermined intervals a periodic vendor payment corresponding to the cost of
5 the component multiplied by an interest rate factor and divided by a number of time
6 intervals that elapse until an estimated value of the component is zero; and
7 indicating purchasing the computer component from the vendor for a
8 purchase amount after a selected number of time intervals have passed and after paying a
9 selected number of periodic vendor payments, the purchase amount corresponding to a
10 remaining value of the computer component.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 indicating leasing of at least one component of the computer equipment
3 from the vendor by receiving the component from the vendor and paying the vendor at
4 predetermined intervals a periodic vendor payment corresponding to the cost of the
5 component multiplied by an interest rate factor and divided by a number of time intervals
6 that elapse until the value of the component is zero; and
7 indicating continuing to lease the components and pay the vendor the
8 periodic vendor payment after the number of time intervals has passed.

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1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein updating a database to indicate a
2 lease of the computer equipment includes indicating receipt from the customer of a
3 plurality of periodic payments having equal values.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein updating a database to indicate a
2 lease of the computer equipment includes indicating receipt from the customer a plurality
3 of periodic payments with each successive payment being less than the preceding
4 payment.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 indicating refurbishing of the components of the computer equipment after
3 receiving the computer equipment back from the customer; and
4 indicating transmission of the computer equipment with the refurbished
5 components to another customer.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising indicating payment of an
2 interest fee for the computer components.

1 11. A method for providing computer equipment to a customer,
2 comprising:
3 leasing at least one component of the computer equipment from a vendor by
4 receiving the component from the vendor and paying the vendor a periodic vendor
5 payment;
6 installing the component in the computer equipment; and
7 leasing the computer equipment to a customer in return for payment from
8 the customer corresponding at least in part to the length of time the customer leases the
9 computer equipment.

1 12. The method of claim 11 wherein the customer is a first customer
2 and the payment is a first customer payment, and wherein the method further comprises
3 selling the computer equipment to a second customer, or leasing the computer equipment
4 to the second customer by providing the computer equipment to the second customer and
5 receiving a second customer payment corresponding at least in part to the length of time
6 the second customer leases the computer equipment.

1 13. The method of claim 11, further comprising:
2 receiving an indication from the customer that the computer equipment
3 lease is terminated after an arbitrary, customer-selected time period has elapsed, without
4 incurring a penalty to the customer; and
5 receiving the computer equipment back from the customer.

1 14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
2 ceasing to receive payment from the customer upon termination of the
3 computer equipment lease; and
4 ceasing to pay the vendor for the computer component.

1 15. The method of claim 11 wherein installing the component in the
2 computer equipment includes installing the component in a personal computer, notebook
3 computer or server.

1 16. A method in a computer system for providing computer equipment
2 to a customer, comprising:
3 updating a database to indicate that at least one component of the computer
4 equipment is leased from a vendor, the lease including receiving the component from the
5 vendor and paying the vendor a periodic vendor payment;
6 receiving an indication that the component is installed in the computer
7 equipment;

8 updating a database to indicate that the computer equipment is leased to a
9 customer in return for a payment from the customer corresponding at least in part to a
10 length of time the customer leases the computer equipment; and

11 updating a database to indicate that the computer equipment is received
12 back from the customer and the lease with the customer is terminated after an arbitrary,
13 customer-selected period of time has elapsed without penalty to the customer.

1 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising updating a database to
2 indicate continued payments to the vendor for the component after having paid the
3 vendor a total amount for the component that is at least equal to an initial value of the
4 component, while leasing the computer equipment to the customer or another customer.

1 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the customer is a first customer
2 and the payment is a first customer payment, and wherein the method further comprises
3 updating a database to indicate a sale of the computer equipment to a second customer,
4 or a lease of the computer equipment to the second customer by providing the computer
5 equipment to the second customer and receiving a second customer payment
6 corresponding at least in part to the length of time the second customer leases the
7 computer equipment.

1 19. A method for providing computer equipment to customers,
2 comprising:

3 leasing at least one component of the computer equipment from a vendor by
4 receiving the component from the vendor and paying the vendor a periodic vendor
5 payment;

6 installing the component into the computer equipment;

7 leasing the computer equipment to a first customer by providing the
8 computer equipment to the first customer and receiving a first customer payment
9 corresponding at least in part to a length of time the computer equipment is leased by the
10 first customer;

receiving the computer equipment back from the first customer after an arbitrary customer-selected period of time has elapsed without penalty to the customer; ceasing to receive the first customer payment; purchasing the component from the vendor; selling the computer equipment to a second customer, or leasing the computer equipment to the second customer by providing the computer equipment to the second customer and receiving a second customer payment corresponding to a length of time the computer equipment is leased by the second customer while continuing to pay the vendor the periodic vendor payment.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the component is a component of a personal computer and installing the component includes installing the component in a personal computer, notebook computer or server.

21. The method of claim 19, further comprising: ceasing to pay the vendor the periodic vendor payment for the computer component during a period when the computer equipment is not leased or sold to a customer.

22. A method for obtaining computer equipment, comprising: leasing the computer equipment from a leasing entity by receiving the computer equipment from the entity and paying to the entity at least one periodic payment corresponding at least in part to a length of time the computer equipment is leased from the entity; and returning the computer equipment to the entity without penalty after an arbitrary period of time has elapsed.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein leasing the computer equipment from the leasing entity includes paying the entity a plurality of periodic payments having equal values.

1 24. The method of claim 22 wherein leasing the computer equipment
2 from the entity includes paying the entity a plurality of periodic payments with each
3 successive payment being less than the preceding payment.

1 25. The method of claim 22 wherein leasing the computer equipment
2 includes leasing a personal computer, notebook computer or server.

1 26. The method of claim 22, further comprising paying the periodic
2 payment before the start of the period for which the computer equipment is leased.

1 27. A method in a computer system for providing computer components
2 to a component assembler, comprising:

3 updating a database to indicate receiving from the assembler a commitment
4 to lease at least a selected number of computer components;

5 updating a database to indicate leasing each computer component to the
6 assembler, the leasing including providing the computer components to the assembler
7 and receiving a plurality of periodic payments from the assembler; and

8 indicating continued periodic payments from the assembler for at least one
9 of the components after having received total payments from the vendor for the computer
10 component at least equal to an initial value of at least one computer component.

1 28. The method of claim 27, further comprising indicating ceasing to
2 receive periodic payments from the assembler while a piece of computer equipment in
3 which the at least one component is installed and is not leased or sold to a customer of
4 the assembler.

1 29. The method of claim 27 wherein indicating continued periodic
2 payments from the assembler includes indicating periodic payments received while a

3 piece of the computer equipment in which the at least one component is installed is
4 leased to a customer of the assembler.

1 30. A computer-readable medium, the contents of which perform a
2 method for tracking computer leasing information, the method comprising:

3 tracking an identity of a piece of computer equipment;

4 tracking lease payments made by a customer leasing the piece of computer
5 equipment;

6 receiving an indication that the customer has terminated the lease of the
7 computer equipment at an arbitrary, customer-selected point in time; and

8 ceasing to track lease payments made by the customer without incurring
9 penalty to the customer for terminating the lease at the arbitrary, customer-selected point
10 in time.

1 31. The computer-readable medium of claim 30 wherein the method
2 further comprises:

3 tracking an identity of a component of the computer equipment leased from
4 a component vendor; and

5 tracking lease payments made to the component vendor.

1 32. A computer system for tracking computer leasing information,
2 comprising:

3 an identity tracker capable of tracking an identity of a piece of computer
4 equipment;

5 a lease payment tracker capable of tracking lease payments made by a
6 customer leasing the piece of computer equipment; and

7 a termination tracker capable of receiving an indication that the customer
8 has terminated the lease of the computer equipment at an arbitrary customer-selected
9 point in time without incurring a penalty to the customer for terminating the lease at the
10 customer-selected point in time.

1 33. The computer system of claim 32 wherein the identity tracker is a
2 first identity tracker and the lease payment tracker is a first lease payment tracker, and
3 wherein the system further comprises:

4 a second identity tracker capable of tracking an identity of a component of
5 the piece of computer equipment leased from a component vendor; and

6 a second lease payment tracker capable of tracking lease payments made to
7 a component vendor for the component of the piece of computer equipment.